

Reed College Occupational Health and Safety Committee Presents

YOUR HEALTH

YOUR SAFETY

OUR CONCERN

BICYCLE SAFETY



There's nothing like riding through the streets, a crisp wind flowing through your hair, without a care in the world. But, um, how can you feel that crisp wind when your helmet is firmly in place? Since Portland is a wonderful bike town, likewise you should be a fabulously conscientious Portland cyclist.



ON THE ROAD

U.S. BIKE STATS

There are an estimated 85 million bicycle riders.

At least 600 bicyclists die every year.

1% of all trips are made on bike.

Research has shown that tripling the number of bicyclists on the street cuts motorist-bicyclist crashes in half.

Bicycles use 2% as much energy as cars per passenger-kilometer, and cost less than 3% as much to purchase.

Venturing outside the bubble can be dangerous, but we all must leave one day. The following sections address the required biking equipment and some safe riding guidelines for biking in full adherence of the law. Critical massers, this one's for you.

GEAR UP

Oregon State Law says that:

Anyone under the age of 16 must wear a helmet. It is advisable that everybody wear a bike helmet at all times while riding.

After dusk, you are required to have a white front light and a rear red reflector. These should be visible from 500 ft. A rear light is recommended, though not required.

All bikes must have at least one working brake, even fixed gear bikes.

TOURING LOCALLY

Below are just a few tips for those intrepid travellers who take to the Reed College byways everyday. The best advice we can give is that you register your bike with Community Safety. This way it is easy to file a missing property report in the unfortunate event that your bike is stolen. Also, the registration sticker on the bike may deter theft. You can register your bike in 28 West, online, or with a mobile app (more information at project529.com/reed).

The rest of our advice to campus riders, briefly:

Wear a helmet.

Be thoughtful of pedestrians: they have the right of way.

Lock up your bike every time you stop.

MAINTENANCE TIPS

Embossed on the side of your tires is a pressure rating, usually in PSI (pounds per square inch). Keep your tires inflated to this rating: riding will be much easier, and you will protect yourself from pinch-flats.

Be kind to your knees: for the most efficient and best ergonomic ride, make sure your seat is high enough. Sitting on the saddle, your leg, with the foot flat on the pedal at its lowest point in rotation, should be straight, without locking your knee.

In this wet weather, lube and oil washes off and certain parts are likely to rust. For frequent riders, oil your chain at least once a week using chain lubricant, and have your bike overhauled once a year. This will greatly increase the lifespan of your components.

HEADGEAR

About half a million people a year visit emergency rooms across the US because of bike injuries; 67,000 of which have head injuries.

Helmets are important! They are so important that the US government has created safety standards for them.



Accordingly, your helmet should have a snappy sticker from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). If not, consider acquiring one that does. Consider that the shock-absorbing styrofoam of your helmet has a lifespan: after 3-5 years, it dries out and is damaged from sweat and UV rays. Replace it! It becomes brittle instead of shock-absorbing, and you're not wearing that for style! There should be a label inside that has the manufacture date. Never wear a helmet that has lost its hard-plastic shell: that is not how it was designed to protect you, and in case of a crash, the soft styrofoam is likely to catch on the pavement instead of skidding, potentially causing severe neck injury.

When choosing a helmet, you don't want anything too big or too small. Modern helmets are fitted with an adjuster dial in the back - this is a big safety improvement to the old style. The helmet should be level on your head, covering your forehead. Protect that frontal lobe! Remember to always keep the chinstrap fastened while biking.



BIKING RULES

Biking falls in that gray area where law and practice can get pretty fuzzy. Most road rules are meant for cars, although specific rules do exist for bikes (see www.stc-law.com/bicycle.html for specifics). In Portland, 13% of reported crashes occur when a cyclist runs a stop sign or signal, so be sure to watch the road. You should find that following the guidelines below are excellent ways to keep you out of the hospital and out of trouble.

- Ride with traffic. You are legally allowed to take a whole lane, which might be a safer option on roads with no shoulder.
- Follow traffic laws and signs.
- Remember, pedestrians have the right of way. Watch out and be sure to let them pass.

SOME TIPS:

- Portland has a fantastic infrastructure of bike paths and bike routes. Bike routes are low-traffic streets, with fewer stop signs, strategically chosen throughout the city for bike commuting. Excellent maps of these routes, bike lanes and multiuse paths are available at: <http://tinyurl.com/PDXBIKE-Map>
- When maneuvering, make eye contact with drivers.



- Use hand signals when appropriate.
- Be cautious when passing parked cars as doors may be opened without warning.
- Take care of your bike. Regularly cleaning and oiling your chain will extend the lifespan of your drivetrain. Use wet, or heavy weight oil, for better performance in wet conditions.

THE BIG GREEN BOX



IT'S WET OUT THERE

Rain is a fact of life in the Northwest, and the world of biking changes when the roads get slicker. In this section, we'll cover a couple of tips to keep you safe when the roads get wet.

- Having the right equipment makes a difference. If you want to avoid the skunk look, fenders are a wise investment.
- If you have to leave your bike outside when it's raining, be sure to position your lock so water doesn't run into the keyhole and rust.
- Once you get on the road, ride slower. Your brakes will work differently than when dry. It's a good idea to test your brakes before starting out to get a feel for how they will react.
- Avoid wet leaves: They are the single biggest skidding/slipping hazard on the road.
- Pay more attention to motorists, because they have less control over their vehicles - and they're bigger than you.

The number one cause of a bike-car crash in Portland is the right hook; when a car turns right into a cyclist. In order to engineer a solution for this problem, city officials are borrowing an idea from Europe, namely the "bike box," or "big green box." It gives cyclists a place to idle when waiting for a red light to turn green where cars will be much less likely to hit them.

It's pretty simple to understand. At intersections with bike boxes, there are two stop lines in the right hand lane, one 14 feet in front of the other. The first stop line is for motor vehicles, and the second stop is for cyclists. The entire lane, including the bike lane, is green between the two stop lines. Cars are not allowed to encroach into the bike box, nor are they allowed to turn right on red at these intersections. Cyclists are allowed the use of the full lane in the bike box, which will be a visual alert to motorists of the presence of cyclists.

Happy cycling!



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Sources:

www.bicyclesafe.com
www.bta4bikes.org/
www.bikeportland.org



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To inform and inspire

